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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001445

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RRT ERBIL: KRG LEADERSHIP WAITING FOR DE MISTURA
ON BOUNDARY DISPUTES

REF: 07 BAGHDAD 4155

Classified By: RRT Erbil Regional Coordinator Jess Baily for Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

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This is an Erbil Regional Reconstruction Team message.

¶1. (C) Summary: KRG leadership told the Ambassador,s Senior Advisor for Northern Iraq and RRTOffs May 6 that they look forward to hearing SRSG de Mistura,s first cut at resolving boundary disputes, promised for delivery in mid-May. KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said the KRG must &compromise, remain flexible, and be realistic,8 while KRG Director for Security Masrur Barzani said the Kurds had already compromised by accepting the Iraqi Constitution and don,t expect to receive all they deserve. Both agreed with the Senior Advisor that now is the time to resolve Kirkuk and northern boundary disputes, warning that the Kurdish public is putting &huge pressure8 on KRG leadership to live up to its promises.

¶2. (C) Summary continued: KRG leadership did not indicate unhappiness with de Mistura,s anticipated recommendations. Mechanisms for implementing his recommendations, however, remain unclear. Although KRG leadership cites public pressure, there is scant evidence to support the claim that violence will erupt in KRG-controlled areas without rapid headway in resolving boundary disputes. End Summary.

Nechirvan Barzani: Flexible and Upbeat

¶3. (C) The Ambassador,s Senior Advisor and RRTOffs met May 6 with KRG leadership to gauge sentiment on resolving northern boundary disputes and the UN recommendations due mid-May. In discussions with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani (Nechirvan), Senior Advisor noted that the Ambassador believes now is the time to resolve boundary disputes, put them in the past, and push forward on economic development. Nechirvan agreed that future control of Kirkuk needs to be tackled directly, and time is not on our side. De Mistura convinced the KRG to accept UN Secretariat &technical assistance only,8 he explained, but the Kurds continue to mistrust the UN. Nechirvan said his personal assessment is that the public needs to see progress, which puts &huge pressure8 on the KRG. He added that de Mistura,s recommendations permit the KRG to say progress is now being made, but that progress must quickly become tangible. Nechirvan said he expects de Mistura to make a reasonable presentation to the Presidency Council in the next week, and said the Kurds must &compromise, remain flexible, and be realistic.8

¶4. (C) Nechirvan commented that Turkey is not serious about causing problems in Kirkuk, despite rhetoric in the press. Senior Advisor noted that on his visits just a few days before to Kirkuk and districts in Ninewa, he heard concerns from the local communities about the KRG. He said in particular the Shabbak expressed unhappiness with the KRG, and great reluctance to fall under official KRG control. Nechirvan acknowledged problems exist, but he lacks specifics. He said he only hears one side of the story, and wants to hear other points of views as well. However, he noted that Shabbak are Shia, and thus susceptible to Shia political party influence from Dawa and ISCI. (Note: the Shabak leaders who complained about the KRG are ISCI affiliates, and displayed ISCI leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim,s portrait on the wall.)

Masrur Barzani: Reserved, like his Father

¶5. (C) President Massoud Barzani,s son, KDP Security Chief Masrur Barzani (Masrur), gave Senior Advisor a more traditional point of view, beginning with the oft-heard refrain that Kirkuk is not just about oil, but a historical, disputed area, central to decades of Kurdish struggle. He commented that the Kurds had already given up much by agreeing to the Iraqi Constitution and foregoing independent statehood. He also added that if Kirkuk had been resolved in accordance with the Iraqi constitution, it would have allayed all parties,s fears. He said further delays are not an option, as Kurdish constituents are questioning their leaders, promises to resolve Kirkuk.

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¶6. (C) Masrur emphasized that resolving boundaries must be an Iraqi concern only, without interference from neighboring countries. Masrur said the Iraqi Turkoman Front (ITF) takes direction exclusively from Turkish military intelligence and reflects a &hidden agenda8 to prevent Kurds from becoming anything more than what Turkey wants. He made two points: first, the civilian Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) plans to take control of ITF from their military counterparts, and second, the ITF is losing momentum and suffering from leadership splits. Masrur emphasized that the KRG does not have a problem with moderate Turkoman, who are willing to &co-exist and cooperate.8 He said the Kurds understand what it,s like to be treated as a second-class citizens, and the KRG will ensure equal treatment for all minorities in the KRG. He also added that while minorities have rights to their views, &they cannot impose their views on the majority.8

¶7. (C) Remarking on Iran,s &indirect8 interference, versus Turkey,s direct meddling, Masrur pointed out that Iran wants only Shia along Iraq,s border with Iran. As the Arabs who participated in Saddam Hussein,s Arabization program are mostly Shia, they are vulnerable to Iranian influence.

¶8. (C) Comment: KRG leadership did not indicate any unhappiness with de Mistura,s anticipated plan to shift Makhmur, Akre, al-Hamdaniya, and Mandali districts. Mechanisms for implementing his recommendations if they are accepted, however, remain unclear. Ultimately a district-by-district referendum may be necessary to bestow legitimacy on any agreement among the political parties. The Kurds will certainly require the Kurdistan National Assembly to ratify any decision taken.

¶9. (C) Comment continued: Nechirvan may truly lack specifics on abuses by Kurdish local leaders in Ninewa and Kirkuk, but now is not the time for him to visit communities to hear their side of the story. We judge it would further inflame communities chafing under de facto Kurdish control at a delicate moment. While both Nechirvan and Masrur cited public pressure to resolve boundary disputes, scant evidence

exists in KRG-controlled areas to support their assertions. The RRT,s assessment remains that Kurds in KRG-controlled areas are more concerned with employment opportunities and the economy than Kurdish aspirations to control Kirkuk (reftel). Tangible progress, however, will help cover the leadership,s political vulnerabilities. End Comment.
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